

Origin of County Names

Aurora (organized 1882): Roman goddess of dawn

Beadle (1880): Gen. W.H.H. Beadle, early president of Normal School at Madison

Bennett (1912): John E. Bennett, Judge of the Supreme Court and Granville G. Bennett, Dakota Territory Judge

Bon Homme (1862): An island in the Missouri River, literally means "good man"

Brookings (1871): Judge Wilmot W. Brookings, one of the first Dakota settlers

Brown (1881): Alfred Brown of Hutchinson County, 1879 legislator

Brule (1875): Brule band of Sioux Indians who lived in that region

Buffalo (1871): The wild bison of the prairies

Butte (1883): The many buttes characteristic of the topography of the locality.

Campbell (1883): Norman B. Campbell, 1873 legislator, son of Gen. Charles T. Campbell

Charles Mix (1879): U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1858 or a Civil War government scout with same name

Clark (1881): Newton Clark, 1873 legislator

Clay (1862): Named for Henry Clay by Jacob S. Deuel, member of first territorial legislature, 1862-1863

Codington (1878): Rev. G.S.S. Codington, 1877 legislator

Corson (1909): Dighton Corson, Judge of the Supreme Court, 1889-1913

Custer (1877): General George Custer

Davison (1874): Henry C. Davison, early settler in the county

Day (1880): Merritt H. Day, pioneer and 1879 legislator

Deuel (1878): Jacob S. Deuel of Vermillion, member of the first territorial legislature, 1862-1863

Dewey (1909): W.P. Dewey, pioneer; name changed from Rusk in 1883

Douglas (1882): Stephen A. Douglas of Lincoln-Douglas debate fame

Edmunds (1883): Newton Edmunds, second territorial governor, 1863-1866

Fall River (1883): The stream which flows through the county

Faulk (1883): Andrew J. Faulk, third territorial governor, 1866-1869

Grant (1878): General Ulysses S. Grant, Civil War general and United States president

Gregory (1898): John Shaw Gregory of Ft. Randall, 1862 legislator

Haakon (1915): King Haakon VII of Norway

Hamlin (1878): Hannibal Hamlin, United States vice president during Lincoln's first term

Hand (1882): George H. Hand, secretary of Dakota Territory, 1874-1883

Hanson (1871): Joseph R. Hanson, pioneer of Yankton County

Harding (1909): J.A. Harding, 1881 legislator

Hughes (1880): Alexander Hughes, Elk Point, 1873 legislator

Hutchinson (1871): John Hutchinson, first secretary of Dakota Territory, 1862-1865

Hyde (1884): James Hyde, Vermillion, 1873 legislator

Jackson (1915): J.R. Jackson, Minnehaha County, 1883 legislator

Jerauld (1883): H.A. Jerauld, Canton, 1883 legislator

Jones (1917): Named by settlers originally from Jones County, Iowa

Kingsbury (1879): Brothers George W. Kingsbury, 1863 legislator and T.A. Kingsbury, 1872 legislator

Lake (1873): The lakes which are a prominent feature of the county

Lawrence (1877): John Lawrence, Yankton, 1875 legislator

Lincoln (1877): President Abraham Lincoln

Lyman (1893): Major P.W. Lyman, first settler of Yankton County, 1873 legislator

Marshall (1885): Marshall Vincent, homesteader near Andover

McCook (1878): Edwin S. McCook, secretary of Dakota Territory, 1872-1873

McPherson (1885): General James B. McPherson, Civil War general Andover
Meade (1889): Fort Meade which was named for General George G. Meade, commander of the Army of the Potomac during battle of Gettysburg
Mellette (1911): Arthur C. Mellette, first governor of South Dakota, 1889-1893
Miner (1880): Capt. Nelson Miner, Vermillion, and Ephriam Miner, Yankton, members of the 1873 legislature
Minnehaha (1862, abandoned in 1863 because of hostile Indians, reorganized in 1868): Sioux word for waterfalls - "where the water laughs" or "laughing water"
Moody (1873): Col. Gideon C. Moody, Deadwood, early territorial judge and first U.S. Senator, 1889-1891
Pennington (1877): Hon. John L. Pennington, territorial governor, 1874-1878
Perkins (1909): Henry Perkins, 1908 Sturgis state senator
Potter (1883): Dr. Joel Potter, 1877 Yankton legislator and long time steward at the State Hospital at Yankton; name changed from Ashmore in 1875
Roberts (1883): S.G. Roberts of Fargo, North Dakota, or Solomon Robar, early French fur trader
Sanborn (1883): George W. Sanborn, superintendent of the Milwaukee Railroad
Shannon (unorganized, created in 1875): Peter Shannon, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Dakota Territory, 1873-1882
Spink (1879): Honorable S.L. Spink, Yankton, territorial delegate in Congress, 1869-1871
Stanley (1890): General David Stanley, Fort Sully Commandant
Sully (1883): General Alfred Sully, builder of Fort Sully
Todd (unorganized, created 1909): Todd B.S. Todd, Yankton, first territorial delegate, 1862-63; 1864-65
Tripp (1909): Hon. Bartlett Tripp, judge of the territorial court and chairman of the first constitutional convention
Turner (1871): J.W. Turner, a pioneer of Union and Clay Counties
Union (1862): Civil War sentiment; name changed from Cole in 1864
Walworth (1883): Named by settlers originally from Walworth County, Wis.
Yankton (1862): Yankton Indians; Ihanktonwan, meaning "end village"
Ziebach (1911): F.M. Ziebach, noted pioneer editor and 1877 legislator

The following counties were a part of the state at one time or another. Boundaries were very fluid in the early days as legislatures acted on the information available and as organizational patterns emerged.

Adair - used to describe other county boundaries but never actually bounded; **Adams;** **Armstrong** - Moses K. Armstrong, pioneer politician; **Ashmore** - Samuel Ashmore, legislator; **Boreman;** **Bramble** - D.T. Bramble, legislator; **Brugier** - Theophile Brugier, pioneer trader; **Burchard;** **Burdick;** **Cheyenne;** **Choteau** - Ashby A. Choteau of Minnesela, a descendant of the Pierre Choteau of early fur trading fame; **Cole;** **Cragin;** **Delano** - Columbus Delano, secretary of the interior; **Edgerton;** **Ewing;** **Forsythe;** **Greeley;** **Inman;** **Jayne** - William Jayne, first territorial governor; **Lugenbeel** - Colonel at Fort Randall; **Mandan;** **Martin;** **McCauley;** **Mercer;** **Meyer;** **Mills** - A.J. Mills, legislator; **Nowlin** - J.W. Nowlin, Pennington County; **Pratt;** **Rinehart** - W.A. Rinehart, Lawrence County; **Rusk;** **Schnasse;** **Scobey** - J.O.B. Scobey, Brookings County; **Sterling** - George W. Sterling, Huron; **Sheyenne;** **Stone** - James M. Stone, Yankton legislator; **Thompson** - John Thompson, legislator; **Wagner;** **Washabaugh** - Frank J. Washabaugh, lawyer and jurist; **Washington** - General George Washington, first U.S. President; **Wetmore;** **White River;** **Wood** - Blight E. Wood, legislator.